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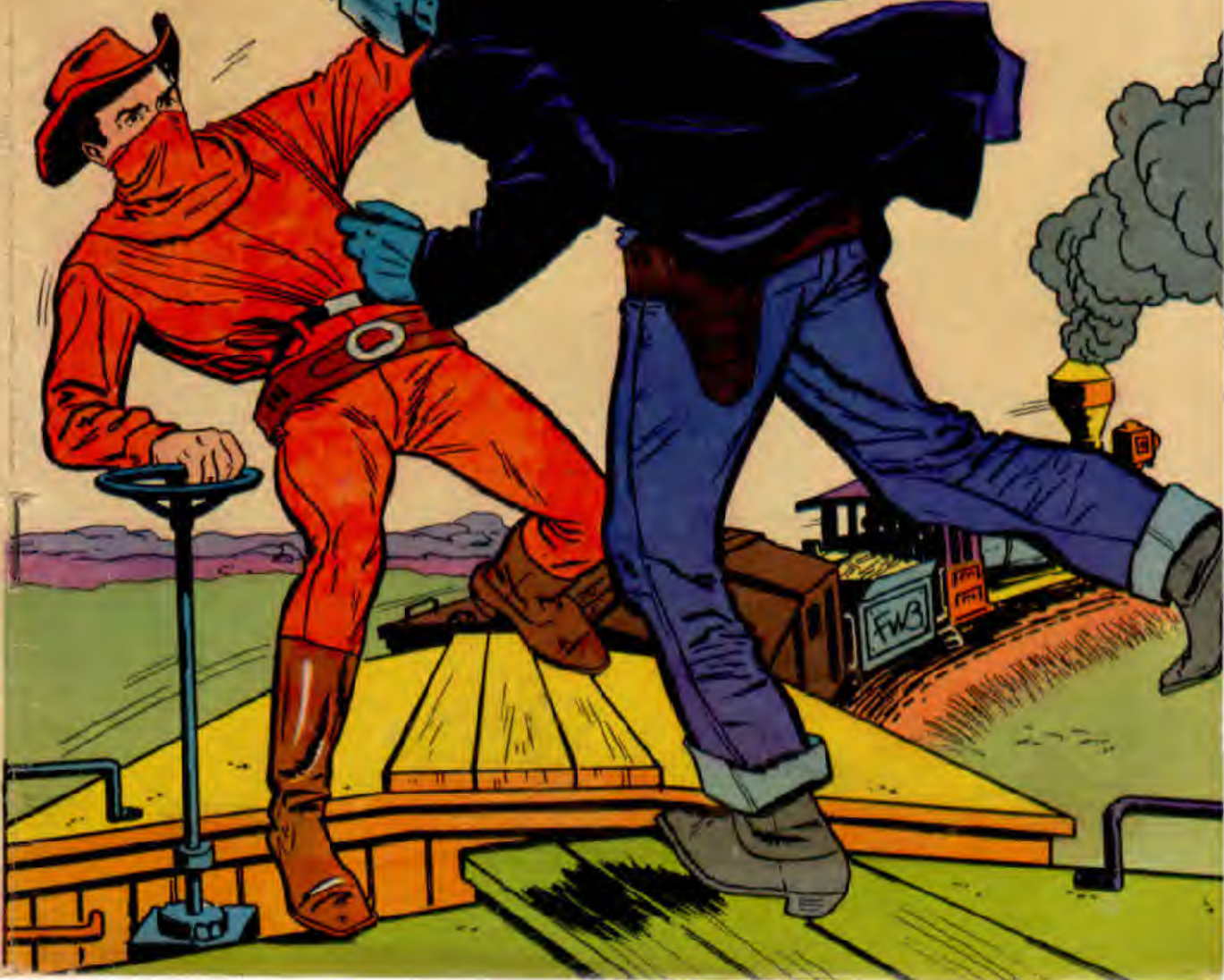
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R.K.O.'S WESTERN STAR



TIM HOLT

"TERROR IN THE IRON MASK!"



TIM
HOLT

NO.32



WEB COMIC
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THE CHILDREN OF ADA, OKLAHOMA RECENTLY PRESENTED TIM HOLT WITH A SHETLAND PONY, TO TRAIN AND TAKE WITH HIM ON HIS TOUR.

A PONY FOR TIM



NOW AS TIM VISITS CRIPPLED CHILDREN'S HOSPITALS ALL OVER THE NATION, THE PONY, NAMED "WHISPER OF ADA" WILL TROT ALONG WITH HIM.

TIM HOLT

I TOLD YOU THAT YOU'D HANG IF YOU OPPOSED ME, HOLT! NOW—YOU DIE!

EUROPE HAD ITS "MAN-IN-THE-IRON-MASK," WHOSE FACE WAS NEVER SEEN. AND THE AMERICAN SOUTHWEST WAS TO KNOW ITS OWN MAN IN A METAL MASK, TOO—WITH THE COMING OF THIS MYSTERIOUS OUTLAW WHO ROBBED AND KILLED WITH ARROGANT BOLDNESS...

WHEN **TIM HOLT**, AS DEPUTY SHERIFF OF THE TOWN OF BULLET, STEPPED IN TO TRACK HIM DOWN, TIM RAN HIS OWN NECK INTO A HANGMAN'S NOOSE! THEN—WHAT COULD **REDMASK** DO TO SAVE HIMSELF FROM THE HANDS OF —

"THE IRON MASK!"

IRON MASK MADE HIS FIRST APPEARANCE AT THE BEND OF THE DRAGON RIVER —



HIS NEXT APPEARANCE WAS AT THE BULLET BANK...



DRAWN BY
FRANK BOLLE

TIM HOLT

HE GALLOPED DOWN ON THE UNION PACIFIC TRAIN AS IT CHUGGED UP HORSESHOE HILL...

GNGGG!



WITH A DARING LEAP, HE WENT OFF HIS HORSE AND INTO THE BAGGAGE CAR—

THERE'S A BOX WITH FIFTY THOUSAND DOLLARS IN THIS CAR. I WANT IT!



FOR TWO DAYS, IRON MASK REMAINED HIDDEN. ON THE EVENING OF THE THIRD DAY AFTER HIS TRAIN ROBBERY—

DON'T MOVE, GENTS! IRON MASK IS AFTER CASH! —THE CASH YOU HAVE ON HAND FOR THIS RANCH SALE!



I WARNED YOU NOT TO MOVE...



YOU'RE LUCKY I DIDN'T PULL THE TRIGGER ON YOU!



I'LL TAKE THIS MONEY AND VAMOOSE! THAT WAY, YOU GENTS WON'T BE MAKING ANY MORE FOOL PLAYS TO PROTECT IT! ADIOS!



TWO DAYS LATER, IN BULLET—

HE COMES AND GOES— AND NOBODY SEES HIS FACE! WE'RE LICKED!

I WOULDN'T SAY THAT, SHERIFF. MATTER OF FACT I KNOW WHERE THIS IRON MASK LIVES!



TIM HOLT



FOR FIVE DAYS, TIM CAMPS OUT, WITH CAL PRINCE'S LITTLE SPREAD ALWAYS UNDER HIS EYES —



ON THE MORNING OF THE SIXTH DAY OF THE LONELY VIGIL —



TIM HOLT

FOR SEVERAL DAYS, TIM HOLT TRIES TO FORGET THE PUZZLING CASE OF THE IRON MASK IN CHORES AT THE T-BAR-H RANCH—



TIM, I GOT TO SEE YUH! THAT IRON MASK HOMBRE JUST ROBBED THE CENTERVILLE STAGE! AND— HE'S GOT OUT A NOTICE THAT HE'S GOING TO HANG YOU!



HIS ATTENTION DISTRACTED BY THE SHERIFF, TIM IS FLUNG SIDWAYS BY THE SUNFISHING BRONC!



I SHOULDN'T HAVE BLURTED OUT THAT NEWS, TIM! DOGGONE, I'M AN IDIOT!

I'LL BE ALL RIGHT IN A LITTLE WHILE. WHAT WAS THAT ABOUT IRON MASK'S INTENDING TO HANG ME?



READ THIS!

WARNING TO DEPUTY SHERIFF TIM HOLT!
IF YOU DO NOT GIVE UP THE CASE OF IRON MASK—
IRON MASK WILL HANG YOU!

SOME HOURS LATER, DEEP IN THE SANDSTONE BLUFFS OF THE RIPSAP MOUNTAINS...

IRON MASK LEFT TRACKS FROM THAT ROBBERY IN CENTERVILLE...AND THEY LEAD UP INTO THESE HILLS!



CRAACK!



TIM HOLT



A MOMENT LATER, TIM DANGLES AT THE END OF A ROPE —

HOURS AFTERWARD, AT APACHE ARROYO —

MAKING HIS WAY BETWEEN THE SWAYING CARS, HE PROPS DOWN INTO THE BAGGAGE CAR —



TIM HOLT

MEANWHILE—SHORT MOMENTS AFTER HE HAS BEEN YANKED FROM HIS SADDLE—TIM FREES HIS WRISTS AND LIFTS A HAND TO THE ROPE ABOVE HIM!



LUCKY FOR ME IRON MASK DIDN'T LOOK UNDER THE NECKER-CHIEF AROUND MY THROAT!

—OR HE'D HAVE SEEN THE LEATHER COLLAR I'M WEARING! WHEN I TOOK THAT SPILL OFF THAT BRONC IN THE T-BAR-H CORRAL, THE SHERIFF AND CHITO FIXED THIS UP FOR ME—TO PROTECT MY SPRAINED NECK!



LUCKILY, THIS COLLAR TOOK THE SHOCK OF BEING YANKED OFF THE HORSE WHEN IRON MASK TRIED TO HANG ME—AND PREVENTED THE ROPE FROM CHOKING ME!



SOMEWHAT LATER—



SINCE IRON MASK WANTS TIM HOLT DEAD, DEAD HE WILL BE! BUT REDMASK ISN'T DEAD—AND AIMS TO KEEP A DATE WITH IRON MASK AT APACHE ARROYO!

HIGH ABOVE THE SWAYING TRAIN BELOW, REDMASK CROUCHES—



THE LAST THING I HEARD AS THE ROPE PULLED ME OFF MY BRONC WAS THAT IRON MASK WAS GOING AFTER THE GOLD BARS BEING CARRIED ON THAT TRAIN!



BUT BEFORE HE GETS THAT GOLD, HE'S GOING TO TANGLE WITH ME...



TIM HOLT

LIKE A MADDENED WILDCAT, REDMASK LEAPS!



HIS FIST SINKS DEEP INTO IRON MASK'S STOMACH!



REELING AND SWAYING BACK AND FORTH ACROSS THE SWINGING CARS, THEY FIGHT SAVAGELY—WITH DEATH AWAITING ONE OR THE OTHER!



AS IRON MASK STEPS BACK FOR ROOM TO PULL HIS GUN, HIS FOOT SLIPS OUT FROM UNDER HIM—



FROM THE RAILROAD BRIDGE OVER WHICH THE TRAIN IS PASSING TO THE WATERS OF THE SWEET-WATER RIVER IS A DROP OF ONE HUNDRED FEET. IRON MASK HITS THE WATER HARD—

MASK—TOO HEAVY? TAKING ME DOWN— DROWNING ME— LIKE AN—ANCHOR!



LATER— HE WAS ED LACERTON—THE TOWN GUNSMITH! HIS FACE WAS SO POKED WITH GUNPOWDER BURNS HE KNEW ANYONE THAT SAW EVEN A SMALL PART OF HIS FACE WOULD KNOW HIM. HE HAD TO USE A SPECIAL MASK, AN **IRON** MASK!

FUNNY! THE VERY THING THAT PROTECTED HIM—BETRAYED AND DROWNED HIM AT THE END!



TIM HOLT

REDMASK IS HOT ON THE TRAIL OF AN OUTLAW BAND OF KILLERS WHEN HE IS SHOT DOWN AND ARRESTED BY—

"The Sheriff of Silver Creek!"

YOU'RE UNDER ARREST FOR MURDER AND ROBBERY, REDMASK! THEY'LL HANG YOU! I'M GOING TO TAKE A LOOK AT THE FACE BEHIND THAT MASK!



FOR DAYS REDMASK HAS FOLLOWED THE NOTORIOUS CANYON CITY BANDITS THROUGH THE WIND-ERODED ROCK PILES OF THE SAWTOOTH BADLANDS...

IT TOOK ME TWO WEEKS, AND I'VE TRAVELLED A LONG WAY FROM BULLET—BUT I HAVE THEM NOW!



HOPE YOU'VE FINISHED THAT MEAL, HOMBRES—BECAUSE IT'S THE LAST ONE YOU'LL EAT AS FREE MEN!

REDMASK!



TIM HOLT

LIKE A MADDENED PANTHER, THE CRIMSON CAVALIER THROWS HIMSELF AGAINST THE OUTLAW BAND—!



AS ONE MAN, THE CANYON CITY OUTLAWS TURN AND FLEE...

WHAT A BREAK!

WHOEVER DID IT SURE DID US A BIG FAVOR!



SOME HOURS LATER, A CELL DOOR CLICKS SHUT ON REDMASK—





RELOCKING THE DOORS BEHIND HIM, REDMASK RACES OFF INTO THE NIGHT—



MOVING STEADILY ACROSS THE MOON-DRENCHED SAGE FLATS, REDMASK FOLLOWS THE TRAIL OF THE OUTLAW BAND...



ABOVE HIM, A SENTRY STEADIES HIS RIFLE...



TIM HOLT

BEYOND THE LEDGE WHERE THE SENTRY STOOD, LIE THE DREAD QUICKSAND BOGS OF LOST FLATS...



IF I TOOK FIFTEEN STEPS IN THAT THING I'D SINK TO MY NECK! ...BUT THE OUTLAWS WOULDN'T LEAVE A SENTRY HERE UNLESS THAT'S WHERE THEY WERE HOLED OUT! GUESS I'M STOPPED-- NO! MAYBE THERE IS A CHANCE...



LESS THAN AN HOUR LATER, IN THE OUTLAW'S ROCK HIDEOUT, THAT SITS LIKE A STONE IN A SEA OF SAND...



ON SILENT FEET, REDMASK MOVES TOWARD THE HIDEOUT CABIN --



TIM HOLT

MEANWHILE—

THAT WAS CLEVER OF REDMASK TO GET OUT OF THE JAIL, BUT I'M TOO SMART FOR HIM. HE'S GONE TO REJOIN HIS GANG—AND THIS TIME I'LL BRING THEM ALL IN!



THERE HE IS NOW—LEADING HIS MEN OUT OF THE CABIN ON ANOTHER ROBBERY JOB!



ONCE AGAIN THE GIRL SHERIFF OF SILVER CREEK PULLS TRIGGER AND ONCE AGAIN REDMASK DROPS!

GANGGG! WHOEVER THAT GIRL IS, SHE SURE DID US A FAVOR! BOY—SHE HATES REDMASK EVEN MORE THAN WE DO!



COME ON! SNAP OUT OF IT! I ONLY SHOT TO KNOCK YOU OUT! YOUR GANG GOT AWAY, BUT YOU'RE GOING TO LEAD ME TO THEM—WITH A POSSE AT MY BACK!



OH, NO! NOT YOU AGAIN! NOT AFTER I HAD THEM CAPTURED AND DISARMED!

YOU ALMOST SOUND CONVINCING! BUT YOU'LL BE A LOT MORE CONVINCING BEHIND THOSE JAIL BARS! GET GOING! YOU HAVE A LONG WALK!



OF ALL THE IDIOTIC STUNTS! I'M BEGINNING TO THINK YOU'RE THEIR LEADER! TWICE I HAD THEM! TWICE YOU SHOT ME, AND LET THEM ESCAPE!

THIS PLAY-ACTING DOES NOT FOOL ME! GET MOVING!



OH!!!

MAYBE MY PLAY-ACTING DIDN'T FOOL YOU, BUT IT LET ME GET CLOSE ENOUGH TO YOU FOR THIS!



TIM HOLT



SOME HOURS LATER, AFTER THE CANYON CITY BAD BUNCH ARE BEHIND THE CELL BARS OF THE SILVER CREEK JAIL...



AS REDMASK RIDES AWAY FROM SILVER CREEK, THE TOWN'S SHERIFF CHOKES BACK A SIGH.



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HURRY MAIL TODAY



GHOST RIDER

THE

HE CAME IN A STAGECOACH—
QUIET—LIKE, PEACEABLE. BUT
UNDER HIS SHINY SKULL LAY
THE BRAIN OF A SOCRATES,
AND UNDER HIS CHEST BEAT
THE HEART OF A LUCIFER—
HE WAS THE BRAIN—
IMPORTED BY ALL THE
OWLHOOTS OF THE TERRITORY
TO GET RID OF THE GHOST
RIDER ...!

DEATH CHUCKLED...
FOR WHAT GREATER PRIZE
WAS THERE FOR **DEATH**
THAN THE GHOST RIDER
HIMSELF ...? AND **DEATH**
BECKONED GRIMLY TO THE
GHOST RIDER WHEN ...

The
BRAIN
Came
WEST



SILVERTOWN'S
BANK GETS SOME
AFTER-HOUR
VISITORS—

HEY! YUH GOTTA
MAKE SUCH A
RUCKUS?

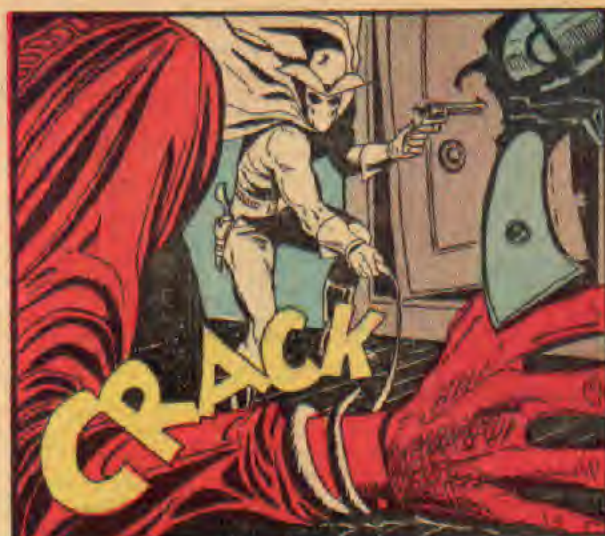
NOTHIN'
TO WORRY
ABOUT—
THE
TOWNSFOLK
ARE ALL
SLEEPIN' OFF
THET BIG
'WEDDIN'
SHINDIS...

BLOODY!

HIT
LEATHER,
MEN!
NOBODY
HEARD—

I HAVE HEARD YOUR EVIL
EXPLOSION RIP ASUNDER
THE STILLNESS OF THE
NIGHT!





WEDDING FESTIVITIES MAY HAVE DULLED THE SENSES OF MORTAL GUARDIANS OF THE LAW — BUT **THE GHOST RIDER** NEVER RESTS ...!



A PARCEL FOR YOU, SHERIFF — READY FOR STORAGE. THEY WERE ROBBING THE BANK.

THANK YUH, GHOST RIDER! DON'T KNOW WHAT THIS TERRITORY WOULD DO WITHOUT YUH ...!



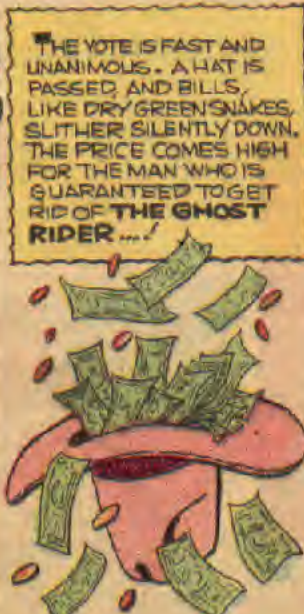
THE NEXT NIGHT, A GRIM CONCLAVE MEETS IN SILVERTOWN'S CEMETERY —

SUMPTIN'S GOTTA BE DONE ABOUT THET **GHOST RIDER**! IT'S GETTIN' SO A MAN CAN'T EVEN THINK OF HOLDING UP A STAGE OR A BANK WITHOUT THET DURNED SPOOK GALLOPIN' UP OUTATHE NIGHT!

WHAT KIN WE DO? 'SIDE FRUM 'CLEARIN' OUT?



YUH'VE ALL HEARD OF **THE BRAIN**! HE WORKS IN THE EAST MAINLY — BUT HE KIN BE CONTACTED. GETTIN' RID OF PESKY UPHOLDERS OF THUH LAW IS HIS SPECIALTY. I SAY — CALL HIM IN!



THE VOTE IS FAST AND UNANIMOUS. A HAT IS PASSED, AND BILLS, LIKE DRY GREEN SNAKES, SLITHER SILENTLY DOWN. THE PRICE COMES HIGH FOR THE MAN WHO IS GUARANTEED TO GET RID OF **THE GHOST RIDER** ...!



AND WHEN HIS PRICE IS MET —

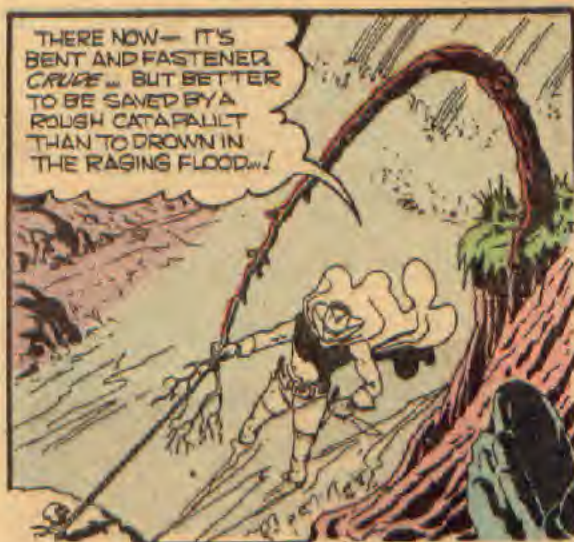
THE BRAIN'S ON THIS STAGE ... THAT'S ALL HE EVER LETS YUH KNOW — WHEN HE'S COMIN' ... WHO HE IS — WHAT HE LOOKS LIKE — THOSE ARE THINGS **NOBODY** KNOWS ...!



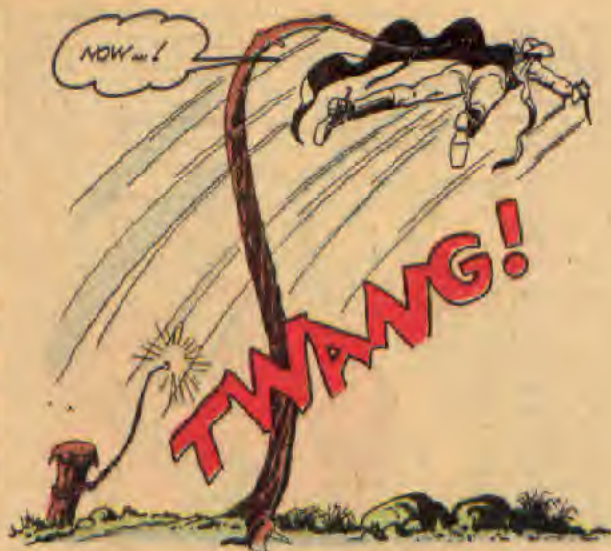
THE VILLAINS FLEE, AND THE GHOST RIDER GIVES CHASE. HE FOLLOWS THEM INTO A NARROW RAVINE—





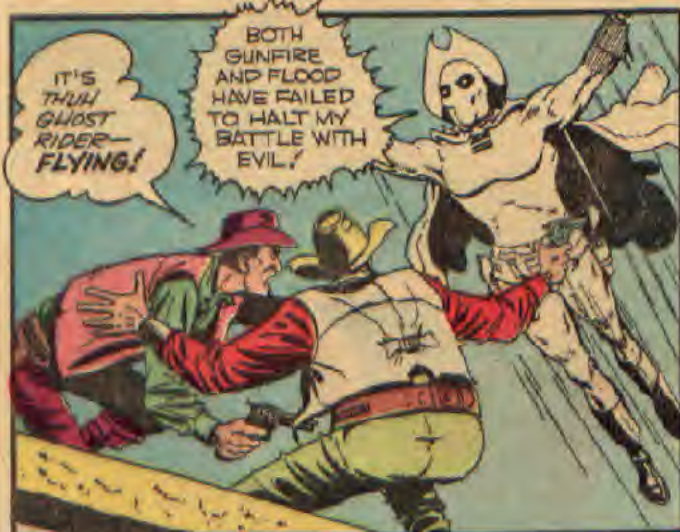


THERE NOW— IT'S BENT AND FASTENER CRUISE... BUT BETTER TO BE SAVED BY A ROUGH CATAPULT THAN TO DROWN IN THE RAGING FLOOD...



NOW...

TWANG!



IT'S THUH GHOST RIDER— FLYING!

BOTH GUNFIRE AND FLOOD HAVE FAILED TO HALT MY BATTLE WITH EVIL!



IT'S THUH BRAIN'S WORK, GHOST RIDER! HE CAME OUT WEST TO HELP US GET RID OF YUH... NONE OF US KNOWS WHO HE IS— ALL WE KNOW IS THAT HE CAME ON THE STAGE TWO WEDNESDAYS AGO... WE PICK UP HIS PLANS IN HOLLOW ROCKS ON THE STAGE COACH ROUTE...

THE NEXT MORNING, THE GHOST RIDER VISITS THE STAGE COACH OFFICE — AS REX FURY, FEDERAL MARSHAL.

I WANT TO SEE THE PASSENGER LIST OF THE COACH THAT CAME INTO TOWN TWO WEDNESDAYS AGO.

WE DON'T KEEP ANY LISTS, FURY— BUT THE DRIVER'S OUT IN BACK. MEBBE HE CAN TELL YUH—



YOP—I REMEMBER... THET HINDU FAHIR CAME— SWAMI JOSEPH— HE'S OVER IN THE HOTEL... THEN THERE WAS A MR. JOSEPH— LOOKED LIKE A GAMBLING GENT... AND THEN THERE WAS THIS BIG SALOOT— LOOKED LIKE AN APE... RED MALONE, I THINK HE CALLED HIMSELF...



LATER—

I AM SWAMI JOSEPH. YOU WANT ME TO READ YOUR FUTURE...?

NO—I WANT TO READ YOUR PAST!



FURY SEATS HIMSELF... JUST THEN A GUST OF WIND THROUGH THE OPEN WINDOW BLOWS SOME PAPERS OFF THE TABLE. FURY BENDS DOWN FOR THEM, AND—



JUST A SHOULDER WOUND... BUT THE BULLET WAS MEANT FOR ME!... TONIGHT THE BRAIN WILL BE VISITED BY THE GHOST RIDER!... BUT FIRST I MUST DROP A MESSAGE IN A HOLLOW ROCK...



THAT NIGHT—

BRAIN—I HAVE COME TO HAUNT YOU! I KNOW YOUR SECRET! YOU CAME AS THE DRIVER OF THE STAGECOACH WHEN EVERYONE EXPECTED YOU TO COME AS A PASSENGER...!

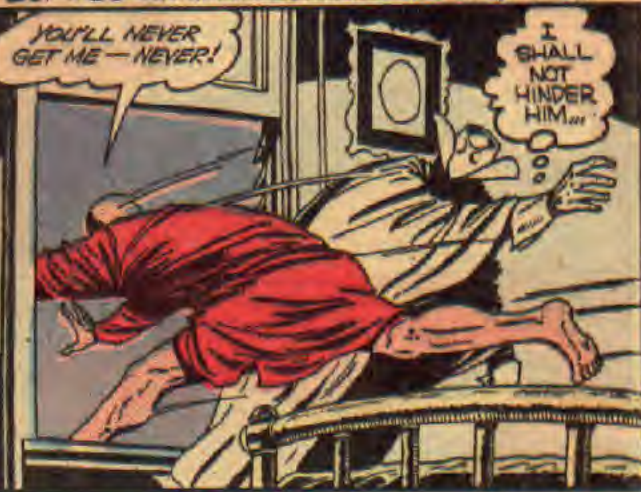
YOU'RE CRAZY! STAY AWAY!



UNMASKED AT LAST! THERE—BRANDED NOW WITH YOUR TRUE NAME! YOU GAVE YOURSELF AWAY, BRAIN, BY TRYING TO KILL FURY WHEN YOU WERE THE ONLY NEWCOMER IN TOWN WHO KNEW OF HIS MISSION HERE...!



BUT THE BRAIN WRENCHES HIMSELF VIOLENTLY AWAY...



... FROM LEAPING TO HIS DOOM!



EVIL MEN COME TO EVIL ENDS... I LEFT A MESSAGE FOR THE BRAIN'S EMPLOYERS, TELLING THEM THAT THE GHOST RIDER WOULD LEAP FROM THAT WINDOW TONIGHT—TO BE READY WITH THEIR GUNS...

WELL, THE BRAIN CAME WEST... AND IS HERE TO STAY...!



YOU be THE GHOST RIDER



Amaze your friends
with this weird scarf
that becomes a real
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A jet-black rayon crape
scarf...with the name of
THE GHOST RIDER bannered
on it...and a **SPOOKY**
white mask that becomes a
GHOST RIDER SKULL when
the mask is tied on...!

MAIL
COUPON
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TO:

TIM HOLT.

The Plains Indian:

the Comanche

THE COMANCHES were the Cossacks of the Plains. They were fighters. They looked with scorn on the Indians who farmed, who lived in one spot for more than a few months. Not for the *nimenim*, as they called themselves, were the hoe and the hut! Instead, the grassy Plains was their floor, the blue bowl of sky their roof, the vast herds of buffalo their unending source of food!

The horse and the Comanche went together as naturally as fish and swimming. Mounted on their pinto or piebald ponies, they were the finest horsemanship of the entire world. Not even the Russian Cossacks, or the Uhlans of Imperial Germany, could match their feats of athletic daring. More than one military expert has called them the "finest natural cavalry" ever assembled.

From the earliest age, the Comanche youths were taught to ride. They could hang over the side of a galloping mount so that an enemy on the opposite side could see nothing—not even the mocassined foot that clung by some magnetic force to the bouncing rump, nor the hand twisted in the pony's long mane!

Before the coming of the horse, the Comanche had ranged the rivers and the wooded mountain areas bordering the plains. A branch of the Shoshonean stock, like the Bannocks, Utes and Shoshoni, they were powerful and muscular, but somewhat ungraceful on their feet. In 1714 the Comanche acquired the horse—and the change was drastic! Instead of being awkward, they became pictures of grace. It was almost as if the Comanche were made to sit a horse's back, so impressive was the difference.

It is not so strange, then, considering the great role the horse played in the Comanche culture, that the Comanches owned the biggest horse herds of all the Plains Indians. Close to Mexico, they swooped across the Rio Grande on horse-stealing raids, bringing back with them fleet Spanish steeds descended from Arabian stock. And when roving bands of Comanche warriors sighted a wild horse herd, out came their maguay lariats, and the chase was on!

While the *nimenim* were no great game-players, as were others of the Plains Indian tribes, they did excel in feats of horsemanship and in horse-racing. Almost childlike in their boastfulness and delight in these arts, the Comanche often gambled heavily on the outcome of races among themselves. Naturally, they lost horses in war and in accidents, but there were always plenty to draw from. It has been estimated that some Comanches owned as many as two hundred!

The Crow Indian is usually credited with being the world's best horse-thief—but the redmen themselves shake their heads and point to the Comanche in awe.

Supplementing their horse was their short ash bow, an ideal weapon for use on the back of a flying pony. In their fringed quivers were one hundred slender arrows: some bone-tipped, some set with thin steel slivers. It is small wonder, then, that the Comanche was so feared in battle. Dashing in, red throats quivering with the war-whoop, short bows twanging, sending thin needles of death through the hot Texas sunlight, dropping to the far side of their galloping ponies so as to present no target to the enemy, the *nimenim* rode with chins high, masters of their grassy plains.

The Comanche dwelt south of the Wichita Mountains, along the Red River and its tributaries, often ranging west and southward into Mexico. They selected camp sites by flowing water (rivers), but on their war or hunting parties, often traveled "dry", knowing with that sense of the true nomad, the locations of waterholes and rock sinks fed by deep springs.

A true Plains Indian tribe, the Comanche's culture was much the same as that of the other Plains Indians. In war they used the bow and arrow, the stone-hammer and pipe-axe, the round buffalo shield. They rarely wore the jackets of buckskin that the northern tribes used, but contended themselves with hip-high leggins fronted and backed by buckskin flaps.

The Comanche used the tepee, the universal dwelling of the Plains Indian, and decorated it, as did the others, with ornate

TIM HOLT

representations of his deeds in black and red and yellow pigments. By trading with the Navajo and Apache, the Comanche bought silver ornaments and belt buckles, and richly painted blankets. The Comanche stock-in-trade? Horses!

Although friendly to the Navajo and the Kiowas, the Comanche hated the Apaches with a fierce and deadly hatred. A young warrior would rather fight an Apache than eat buffalo steak. With the Kiowas, however, the Comanche had something of an unwritten alliance. They were friends, an unusual state of affairs between such warring tribes as the Comanche and Kiowa.

Four main branches dominated the Comanche family. There were the *quohada*, the *yapparika* (root eaters), the *noyika* (antelopes), and the *kotchatekas* (buffalo eaters). Tribal organization was loose, almost non-existent. The various bands of Comanches roamed from the Arkansas River south into Mexico much as they willed. There was no sun dance to bring them together; for some reason the *nimenim* never adopted this otherwise almost universal plains Indian custom.

The Comanche considered Quana Parker, son of a white girl (Cynthia Ann Parker), and Pahawka, a Comanche war chief, as their greatest warrior. It was Quana who led the attack on 'Dobe Walls in 1874, and who rode in President Theodore Roosevelt's inaugural parade in Washington, D. C. He did much good for his people after he had agreed to take up "the white man's way."

Essentially, the Comanche was a fighting man. Not for him the tilled gardens of the Wichitas and Caddoes. He grew no vegetables! He ate buffalo steaks, and stole fast horses, and shot a short, powerful bow. Since the early coming of the Spanish from Mexico, and the French from Louisiana, the Comanche fought the white man, as one more enemy to be added to the long list of Indian tribes.

Occasionally, the Comanche would trade with the whites, exchanging buffalo robes for horses, rifles and gunpowder. At a very early date, he was a power on the Plains. He fought the Spaniards and he fought the French, and since the Comanches stood at the top of the list when it came to cavalry (and what other form of army was effective on the vast plains?) he always won. As a matter of strict fact, no one ever truly conquered the Comanches. When Quana Parker brought them in to walk the road of peace with the white man, it was not a surrender. It was an agreement to stop fighting and to go live on a reservation; in other words, a peace treaty. But—not surrender!

In Taos, New Mexico, a great fair was held by the Spanish, every year. To Taos

came the Comanche tribes, in paint and blankets, heavy with buffalo hides and captives, and their herds of horses threw the dust skyward. With trading, the Comanche grew rich. It was an ideal life for an Indian—stealing horses, fighting to capture white men and sell them later to the other white men for ransom, hunting for buffalo and then trading the buffalo hides for rifles and gunpowder. And since the Comanche liked fighting so much, other tribes cast envious eyes at their riches, but left their bows hanging in their bow-cases, unstrung.

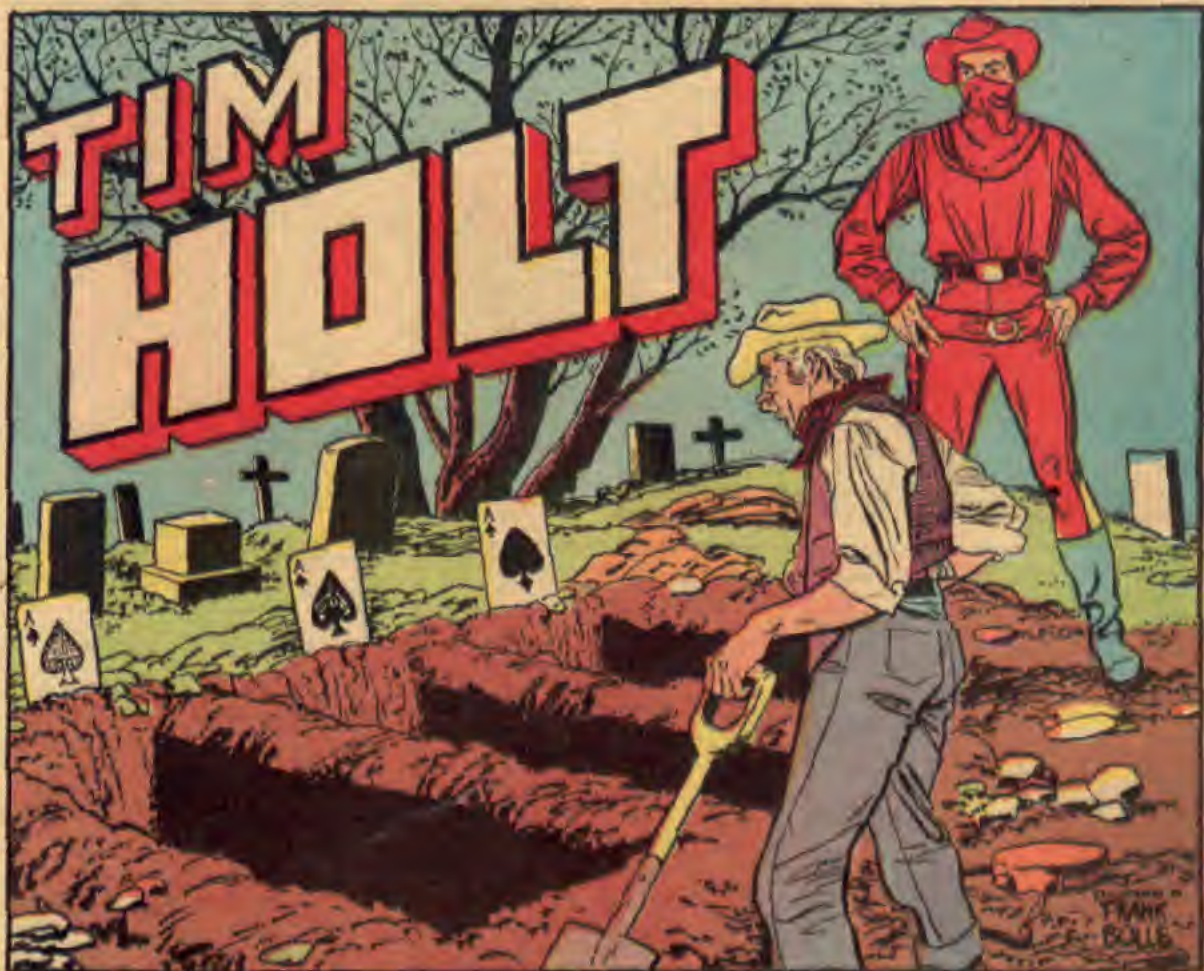
However, when the Americans moved westward, all this changed. Now the Comanche ran head-on into a tough breed of fighting men who were known as the *Texas Rangers*! The invention of the Colt revolver gave the Rangers a weapon that was to build its first reputation fighting these same Comanches in Texas. Soon the Rangers made the Comanche look with renewed respect on the white man as a fighter. It was the beginning of the end of the wild, free life for the *nimenim*.

A great portion of the Comanches' strength in war rested, as has been said, on their astounding horsemanship. There was one riding feat that gave them a reputation for invincibility, however, that must be mentioned. Two riders would gallop their horses at full speed, racing down on a prone Indian (in actual warfare, the prone Indian is a dead Indian, or one badly wounded. At exactly the same moment, they would bend from the saddle of buffalo hide and each grasp an arm and a leg of the prone warrior. In such fashion they would carry him off, either to safety and recovery, or to burial. Naturally, their enemies, when scanning the battlefields, found few Comanches either dead or wounded. They began to suspect the Comanches of never getting hurt, which in turn resulted in their fearfully scanning the horizons continually for sight of a line of racing, whooping Comanches bent on fight and glory.

Sometimes their enemies turned to the white man for help, as the Apaches did, back in 1757. The Spanish gladly agreed to build a fort to protect their Apache friends. But their strategy backfired. The Comanches, stung to anger by this double-dealing on the part of the Apache, rode in force, and on a late winter night in 1758, smashed the Apaches and Spanish so thoroughly that they never forgot it. And so the Comanche continued as king of the plains—until the coming of the Americans.

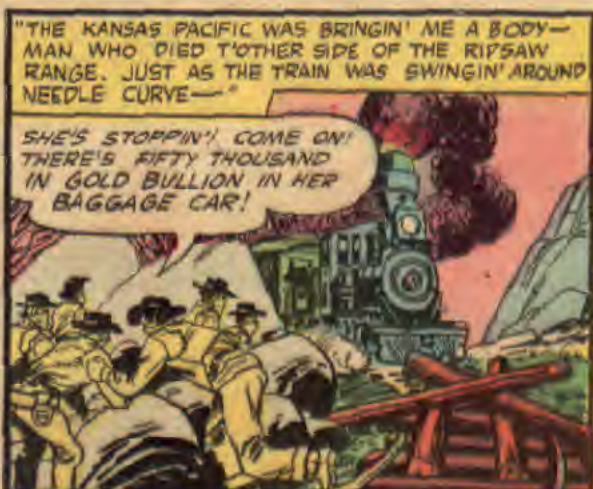
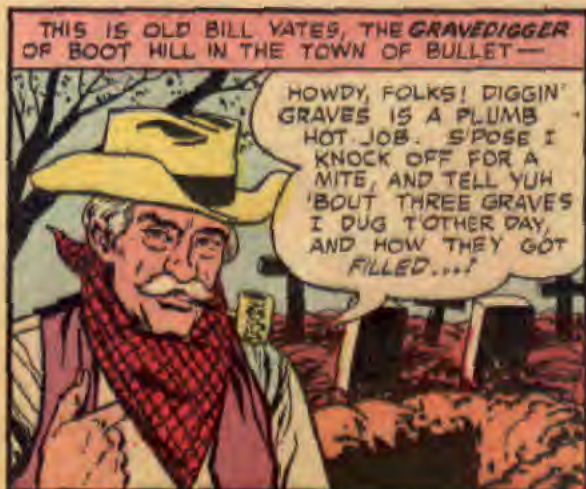
Today, the Comanches live in Oklahoma on the Kiowa reservation. They number around 2000.

THE END



THE CARDS FORETOLD THE DEATHS OF THE THREE KENNEDY BROTHERS, ALL OF THEM BANDITS AND KILLERS — BUT **REDMASK** INTENDED TO CAPTURE, NOT KILL THEM! AS HE TOOK UP THEIR TRAIL, HOWEVER, HE FOUND HIMSELF FIGHTING FATE IN A GRIM ATTEMPT TO KEEP THE BADHATS OUT OF THE —

"THREE GRAVES in BOOT HILL!"



TIM HOLT

"THEM BOYS WAS THE SIX KENNEDY BROTHERS—KILLERS' ALL! ONE OF 'EM LEAPED UP FOR THE ENGINE CAB—"



"THAT HOMBRE DIDN'T KNOW **REDMASK** WAS RIDIN' WITH THE ENGINEER! MATTER OF FACT HE DIDN'T KNOW NOTHIN' FOR QUITE A SPELL!"



I DON'T LIKE TO HIT A MAN FROM THE BACK, BUT WHEN THE ODDS ARE SIX TO ONE, AND INNOCENT PEOPLE IN THE TRAIN MIGHT BE HURT—I CAN'T TAKE A CHANCE!



WELL, YOU'RE IN A POSITION TO SEE THE TROUBLE THAT'S COMING YOUR WAY!



"NOW FOLKS IN THIS PART OF THE COUNTRY KNOW **REDMASK** IS A FIGHTIN' FOOL! THEM KENNEDY BROTHERS WAS BAD-HATS, BUT THEY WASN'T CRAZY ENOUGH TO FIGHT HIM AT ODDS OF ONLY THREE TO ONE, THEIR FAVOR!"



"THAT WAS HOW I GOT MY CLIENT FOR THE GRAVE I'D DUG THAT AFTERNOON. THE TRAIN BROUGHT HIM TO ME ON TIME, THANKS TO **REDMASK**!"



BILL, LOOKS LIKE YOU MADE A MISTAKE!

YOU DUG THREE EXTRA GRAVES! THOSE KENNEDY BROTHERS I CAPTURED ARE ALIVE, AND IN JAIL!



THEM GRAVES AIN'T FER **THEM**! THEY'S FOR THE THREE BOYS THAT GOT AWAY! CARDS SAY YOU'RE GOING TO **KILL** THEM ALL!

TIM HOLT

NOW, HOLD ON! THE CARDS SAY THIS, THE CARDS SAY THAT! YOU DON'T BELIEVE THAT HOGWASH, DO YOU?

LOOK FOR YOURSELF! EVERY TIME I READ 'EM—UP COMES THE ACE OF SPADES! THE DEATH CARD!

NONSENSE! I DON'T KILL OUT-LAWS! I TAKE THEM PRISONER!

YOU AIN'T AGONNA TAKE **THESE** BOYS PRISONER! YOU'RE AGONNA **KILL 'EM!** THE CARDS SAY SO!

"SUDDENLY A HARSH VOICE SNARLED IN THE GRAVEYARD! WE WHIPPED AROUND LIKE WE WAS ON A STRING!"

THE CARDS LIE! I'M RIGHT HERE WITH A GUN THAT SAYS SO! COME TOWARD ME WALKIN' NICE AN' EASY...

"MY BACKBONE WAS COLD AS A DEAD FISH. THAT OUTLAW MARCHED REDMASK AN' ME UP INTO THE HILLS..."

WHEN I GET YOU UP INTO THE HILLS, I'M GOING TO KILL BOTH OF YOU!

"AN HOUR LATER, IN A LINE CABIN NORTH OF RED BUTTES—"

YOU WON'T BE NEEDING THESE BULLETS ANYMORE—NOT WHERE YOU'RE GOING!

IF I COULD GET MY BROTHERS OUT OF JAIL BY TRADING YOU FOR THEM, I'D LET YOU LIVE, BUT—

WON'T DO YOU ANY GOOD! SHERIFF GAGE WOULDN'T DO IT!

SAY YOUR PRAYERS, REDMASK—HERE IT COMES!

DON'T YUM WORRY, REDMASK! THE CARDS SAY THIS KENNEDY HOMBRE IS GOING TO DIE, NOT YOU!

TIM HOLT



TIM HOLT

"HOURS LATER, REDMASK WALKED INTO A HUNTER'S CABIN. HE DID NOT SEE ED KENNEDY STANDING BY THE WOODPILE..."



"SHOOTING'S TOO GOOD FOR YUH, REDMASK! I'M GON' TO SPLIT YOUR HEAD OPEN!"



"REDMASK WHIRLED AROUND! HIS ARM CAME UP, JUST IN TIME!"



"ED KENNEDY WAS CRAZY-MAD! HIM AND REDMASK FOUGHT ALL OVER THE PLACE!"

"IF I CAN'T CLEAVE YOUR HEAD, I'LL BEAT YOU TO DEATH WITH MY FISTS!"



"AS REDMASK SLIPPED ON THE SNOW AND ICE, KENNEDY YANKED HIS GUN—"

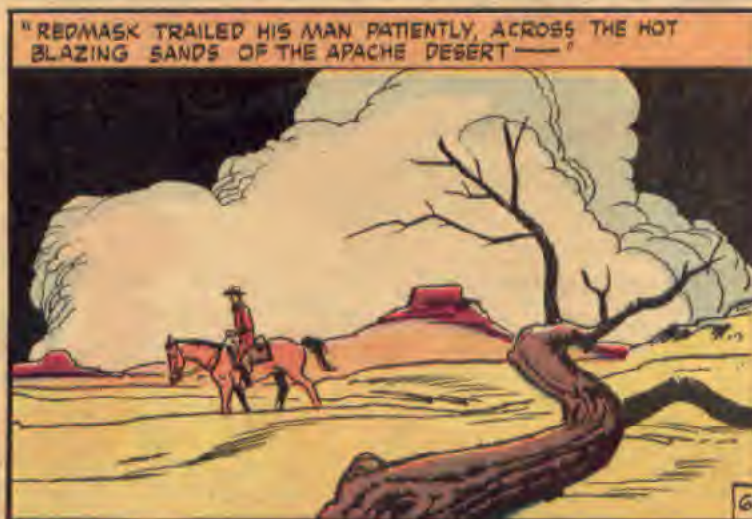
"LOOKS LIKE I'M GOING TO HAVE TO SHOOT YOU AFTER ALL!"



"REDMASK HURLED HIMSELF FORWARD. HIS HAND CLOSED ON KENNEDY'S COLT, AND WRESTLED IT FROM HIS FINGERS —"



TIM HOLT



TIM HOLT

"ON THE MORNING OF THE FOURTH DAY OUT, REDMASK CAME UP ON THE FAR SIDE OF A LITTLE CAMPFIRE."

I'M TAKING NO CHANCES OF KENNEDY DYING WITH A BROKEN NECK! I'M THROWING DOWN ON HIM, PRONTO—!



GET 'EM UP, KENNEDY! I'M MAKING YOU MY PRISONER!

NOBODY TAKES ME ALIVE!

I'M TAKING YOU ALIVE— LIKE THIS!



"NEXT DAY A JAIL CELL DOOR CLICKED SHUT ON THE LAST OF THE KENNEDY BROTHERS—"

RECKON OLD BILL SURE WILL BE DISAPPOINTED! HIS CARDS SAID PHIL WOULD DIE OF A BROKEN NECK! LOOKS LIKE HE WON'T!

"BUT JUSTICE IS SOME SWIFT IN BULLET! TWO DAYS LATER, A FEDERAL JUDGE STOPPED BY TO TRY KENNEDY FOR HIS CRIMES, AFTER A JURY BROUGHT IN THE VERDICT—"

FOR YOUR CRIMES, SINCE YOU HAVE BEEN FOUND GUILTY BY A JURY, I SENTENCE YOU TO HANG AT DAWN!



"NEXT MORNING, THEY CUT PHIL KENNEDY DOWN FROM THE ROPE THAT KILLED HIM. I BURIED HIM AT NOON..."

YOUR CARDS FAILED YOU, AFTER ALL! KENNEDY DIED BY HANGING!

THE CARDS DIDN'T LIE!



DID YOU SEE THE OFFICIAL CORONER'S REPORT, REDMASK? THEY HUNG HIM, ALL RIGHT—BUT THE FALL, WHEN HE TOOK THAT DROP ON THE GIBBET... BROKE HIS NECK!



THE END

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